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What is Anarchism? A Special Issue on the Nature and Meaning of Anarchist Thought

Black Flag

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Anarchy-Curious?

(Excerpted and adapted from AnarchistCafe.org, http://anarchistcafe.org/anarchy-curious/)

Did you come here because of a flyer or handbill that made you curious about Anarchistic ideas? To learn more about what Anarchism is, why we want anarchy, and how we plan to get from our present State-dominated society to a free society without government, read on. Or just drop by the next Anarchist Cafe in your hometown, browse the literature, and strike up a conversation!

Are you interested in learning more about the ideas of Anarchism, the kind of society that Anarchists would like to see, and how we hope to get from our current, State-dominated society to a free society without government? Did you recently get a pamphlet or handbill that piqued your interest about what Anarchism is and what Anarchists do? A-Cafe is a good place to meet local Anarchists to talk more about their views in an informal setting. The Las Vegas Alliance of the Libertarian Left also distributes a series of pamphlets and handbills, called *Vegas Anarchy*, which discuss anarchistic theory and practice in more detail. Here's some of what they have to say on the subject:

What is Anarchy?
Anarchy means lawlessness. It does not mean riot or chaos. The government schools and the corporate media have taught you to believe that Anarchy means disorder because they need you to believe that order and peace can only exist where they are imposed by government laws and enforced by government

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Letter from the Editors: The Coming Anarchist Consensus, Part 2

The questions tackled in this Special Issue—What, ultimately, *is* anarchism? What is its nature? How can it be best and most-succinctly summarized (without being reductive)?—should be simple for us to answer. This is, after all, a publication by anarchists about (surprise!) anarchism. However, as the diversity of perspectives sampled in these pages shows—post-anarchism, anarcha-feminism, anarcho-pacifism, individualism, anarcho-communism, to name a few—simple answers are anything but easily found.

Perhaps, rather than attempt the impossible by suggesting a single definition of anarchism intended to satisfy everyone, we should try to outline, in broad brush, what most schools of anarchism tend to agree on (mirroring the process of finding "points of unity" that all members of an anarchist collective can agree on). Anarchism is, most generally, an orientation against all forms of compulsory hierarchy, power, authority, and inequality, which leads, naturally, toward an orientation in favor of direct forms of democracy, horizontal forms of organization, peaceful modes of conflict resolution, and autonomous forms of self-expression and self-determination.

We say "compulsory" because anarchists don't deny that natural hierarchies might exist—one person may just be able to run faster than another, say, or one movie might simply be better than another (think *Gigli* vs. *The Godfather*)—without anarchism being invalidated. This is not to claim that artistic taste does not involve a great deal of opinion (it does, although whether it is about opinion *only* is a far bigger question than can be answered here—consult a good book on Art Theory or Literary Criticism to get a handle on that). It is also not to say that with sustained effort and meaningful practice, nearly everyone cannot achieve great things (they can—Beethoven's dazzling compositions even while suffering from hearing loss, or Stephen Hawking's excellence as a physicist in spite of paralyzing ALS, are inspiring testaments to this point). What anarchism claims is that even if there *are* natural differences in artistic or physical or other forms of ability, every individual still has the same inherent worth and value and rights as any other simply by being a person. This point, if you discard prejudice and think about it clearly, makes rational sense—what is the logical connection between one's verbal skills, for example, and one's right to access something like medical care? Or food? Or

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Is Anarchism Pacifistic?

(Adapted from the original, unedited, online Anarchist FAQ: http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Anarchist_FAQ/What_is_Anarchism%3F/3.4)

A pacifist strand has long existed in anarchism, with Leo Tolstoy being one of its major figures. This strand is usually called "anarcho-pacifism" (the term "non-violent anarchist" is sometimes used, but this term is unfortunate because it implies the rest of the movement is "violent," which is not the case!). The union of anarchism and pacifism is not surprising given the fundamental ideals and arguments of anarchism. After all, violence, or the threat of violence or harm, is a key means by which individual freedom is destroyed. As Peter Marshall points out, "[g]iven the anarchist's respect for the sovereignty of the individual, in the long run it is non-violence and not violence which is implied by anarchist values." [*Demanding the Impossible*, p.637] Malatesta is even more explicit when he wrote that the "main plank of anarchism is the removal of violence from human relations" and that anarchists "are opposed to violence." [*Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas*, p. 53] However, although many anarchists reject violence and proclaim pacifism, the movement, in general, is not essentially pacifistic (in the sense of opposed to all forms of violence at all times). Rather, it is anti-militarist, being against the organized violence of the state but recognizing that there are important differences between the violence of the oppressor and the violence of the oppressed. This explains why the anarchist movement has always placed a lot of time and energy in opposing the military machine and capitalist wars while, at the same time, supporting and organizing armed resistance against oppression (as in the case of the Makhnovist army during the Russian Revolution, which resisted both Red and White armies, and the militias the anarchists organized to resist the fascists during the Spanish Revolution).

On the question of non-violence, as a rough rule of thumb, the movement divides along Individualist and Social lines. Most Individualist anarchists support purely non-violent tactics of social change, as do the Mutualists. However, Individualist anarchism is not pacifist as such, as many support the idea of violence in self-defence against aggression. Most social anarchists, on the other hand, do support the use of revolutionary violence, holding that physical force will be required to overthrow entrenched power and to resist state and capitalist aggression (although it was an anarcho-syndicalist, Bart de Ligt, who wrote the pacifist classic, *The Conquest of Violence*). As Malatesta put it, violence, while being "in itself an evil," is "justifiable only when it is necessary to defend oneself and others from violence" and that a "slave is always in a state of

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What does anarcha-feminism mean to you?

"Basically, when I strip it down, anarcha-feminism to me means resisting and struggling against oppression and hierarchy. Anarcha-feminism is revolutionary. It seeks to transform the whole of society, and banish all oppressions. It recognizes that oppression isn't something that just happens out there, it happens within us, we oppress and are oppressed, and these oppressions can be seen and felt in every aspect of our lives, through our relationship with ourselves and others all the way through to national and international politics, economics, and culture. There are hierarchies, and, as a result, oppression everywhere….

…What distinguishes anarcha-feminism from other forms of feminism is the recognition that reformist politics is disempowering. We cannot look to a sexist, racist, homophobic anti-woman state and legal system to grant us freedom. We must take it ourselves, and create new, anti-oppressive and anti-hierarchical ways of ways of living, being, and organizing. Anarcha-feminism enables us to regain power and autonomy, to think outside the box, and to act in ways that are new, revolutionary, and empowering. Anarcha-feminism rejects outdated ways of being and doing. It is creative and radical. Anarcha-feminism educates me about the power I have as an individual acting as part of a community…

…I'm an anarchist and a feminist. I want to see this society completely changed. I want to see a new world based on equality, mutual aid, and cooperation, without rulers or ruled, without exploitation, and with much more leisure and love created on the smoldering ruins of this shitty world. And to take up an old slogan: There will be no revolution without women's liberation; there will be no women's liberation without revolution.

What do we mean by "feminism" and "patriarchy"?

A feminist is someone who recognizes patriarchy as a structure and a force which exists within society and is working to, or recognizes the need to, change or get rid of it. Feminism is basically the recognition of a system of male domination in our hierarchical world (patriarchy) and fighting against it with ideas and actions.

Women have been denied control over their own lives, have been owned by their fathers, husbands, and children. Women have been denied access to knowledge, education, and positions of power. Women have been talked of and treated as sexual objects and they have always had male myths surrounding them and limiting their self-recognition. Women have been abused and killed. All this just for being women, and/or not following the "rules" of gender all throughout history. Patriarchy is still going strong. Capitalist society is dependent on hierarchies, and male domination is particularly useful when it comes to helping people internalize the concepts of government, property, and power. And, as a guy, even if you feel fucked over by your boss, you can still go home and exercise your own authority over your wife. Feminism as a movement to end sexist oppression directs our attention to systems of domination, and to the interrelatedness of sex, race, and class oppression…

—Adapted from "What the Fuck is Anarcha-Feminism Anyway?" (2009) by the London Anarcha-Feminist Kolektiv: http://anarchalibrary.blogspot.com/2010/12/what-fuck-is-anarcha-feminism-anyway.html

Anarchism is a way of thinking that denounces the imposition of hierarchy and coercion in humyn relationships and insists on intersectional, horizontal relationships in which "each contributes according to their abilities and is looked after according to their needs." Anarchistic practice creates a diverse world which resists those that demand the oppression of other living beings or the Earth. This world does not sacrifice diversity for any false sense of unity. The anarchistic understanding of the world holds that we may be united in principle and maintain lingual, cultural and organizational differences. This is a practice towards a more authentic world which celebrates the knowledge, music, and art of all peoples. With this value of autonomy, we also do not place notions of individual liberty above the well-being of the community or of the Earth. We maintain autonomy in order to better care for those around us, in our community and any who may freely choose to participate.

We resist the entitlement of imperialist forces and fight back against the oppression of all peoples and living creatures. The capitalist system seeks to commoditize everything to use them as cogs in a machine for their profit and the Earth's destruction. We will oppose this in action as we care for one another. ¡Hasta la victoria! –"Liberacion"

"Anarchy Curious" Cont…

police. The elite few who pull the strings in the government and in the corporate media need you to believe that social order requires social control. After all, they intend to do the controlling. They expect you to surrender your freedom to their authority. In exchange they promise you peace, protection, security, and order. But what they deliver is fear, war, police brutality, and humiliating "security" checkpoints. Their "order" means taking orders. Their "protection" is a prison.

In Anarchy there is another way. Instead of a coercive order imposed by government, we believe in consensual order. Instead of "protection" from brutal government cops, we look to individual and neighborhood self-defense. Instead of "relief" from indifferent government welfare bureaucracies, we look to fighting unions, worker solidarity and cooperative community-based mutual aid. Instead of "order" imposed by obedience to government laws, we look to voluntary contracts and agreements between free people negotiating as equals.

We oppose all government prohibitions, government taxes, government borders, government police, and government wars, because we are for peace, freedom, and social harmony. These can only exist between people who come to agreements as equals, not between people who are forced to obey out of fear. It is government law that produces violence, riot, and disorder. Only in Anarchy can there be true order, real peace, individual freedom and social harmony.

Why Anarchy?
Well, look around. Consider the alternative.

Think about the last time you were at the airport. Think about what it feels like to go through a government "security" checkpoint. The endless lines. The searches. The arbitrary orders about laptops and shoes and liquids and gels. Did the harassment and humiliation make you feel safer? Or did you feel something else?

Think about the feeling that you get in the pit of your stomach when you see a cop's patrol car in your rear-view mirror. Do you feel safer when you see the government at work? Or do you feel something else?

Think about how you felt when you watched the video of police beating Rodney King. Think about how you feel when you see a letter from the IRS in the mail. Think about how you feel every spring as you slog through preparing and filing your taxes.

Think about the billions of dollars that are being spent, and the thousands of lives that are being lost, in an endless, hopeless, deadly, and fundamentally wrong war in Iraq.

Now, think about the fact that every one of these government programs is funded by tax dollars. That you are forced to financially support them, against your will, no matter how foolish or appalling you think they are.

Think about how that makes you feel.

Then, think about your favorite government program. It could be schools, NASA, Social Security, food stamps. Ask yourself, "Would I be willing to give up that program – to give up those services or get them through voluntary grassroots neighborhood groups – if it meant I would never have to feel this way, or make anybody else feel this way, ever again?" Government is not constructive. It is not charitable. It is not peaceful. It is, always, an instrument of force. It is the employer of cops, of soldiers, of jailers, of hangmen. It operates through authority, fear, and violence. Whatever promises it makes, whatever services it claims to offer, what it delivers is misery, humiliation, and terror.

In Anarchy there is another way. Instead of a coercive order imposed by government, we believe in consensual order. Instead of "protection" from brutal government cops, we look to individual and neighborhood self-defense. Instead of "relief" from indifferent government welfare bureaucracies, we look to fighting unions, worker solidarity and cooperative community-based mutual aid. Instead of "order" imposed by obedience to government laws, we look to voluntary contracts and agreements between free people negotiating as equals. Only in Anarchy can there be true social harmony, individual freedom, and real peace.

If you are interested in learning more about these ideas, or meeting other people in your hometown who are working to make them a reality, join us at the Anarchist Café (http://anarchistcafe.org/) for discussion, networking, and strategizing.

More about Anarchism
(links to all of these are available at http://anarchistcafe.org/anarchy-curious/)

- State Socialism and Anarchism: How Far They Agree, and Wherein They Differ by Benjamin Tucker
- InfoShop.org
- flag.blackened.net
- Human Iterations FAQ by William Gillis
- *Studies in the Anarchist Theory of Organizational Behavior* by Kevin Carson
- *Studies in Mutualist Political Economy* by Kevin Carson
- Woman vs. the Nation State: A Manifesto by Carol Moore

What is Anarchism?

I think that anarchism is freedom and equality. It means that each of us should have the maximum amount of freedom compatible with the full and substantive equality of everyone else. It is an individualizing and communizing ideology at the same time.

It is the idea that we do not need the wills of others to be imposed on us from above in order to work, love, play and make life livable for all. It is the systematic re-ordering of relations of power with an emphasis on horizontality rather than verticality. It is, then, a rejection of hierarchy and authority. The power-tripping boss, the war-mongering politician, and the abusive partner should not be able to coerce or force us to do anything just because they occupy a formally or informally titled or empowered position in society. In the same way, the patriarch, the capitalist executive, and the chief of police will be deposed, and nothing identical will take their place, because we will have disintegrated the structures of hierarchy and thus undermined the system that produces them.

It is the idea that capitalism entails the (very unevenly distributed) exploitation of those of us who work for a wage—or for no wage at all—so that we can survive in the world. Capitalism entails mental and physical exhaustion, and hateful division, which uses our differences to further exploit us. Anarchism rejects capitalism, and affirms the idea that we need to destroy a socioeconomic, cultural and political system which glorifies the profit of the ruling elite and kills the rest of us and the planet.

It is the idea that we do not need borders. We reject imaginary lines of exclusion—whether those lines are drawn in the sand of the US/Mexico border or drawn in the racist ideologies of our own minds. We don't need national pride or patriotic fervor to feel connectedness and belonging. Nor do we need nation-states to tell us who belongs and who does not. No one is illegal.

It is the idea that we should strive to prefigure the kind of practices, relations, and institutions that we seek to inhabit now and into the future. And that we should attempt to do this all the time and everywhere—in our streets, workplaces and homes. Prefigurative practice occurs at the level of our relationships with others—it affirms that if the personal is the political, then we need to radically alter the way we relate and orient to others in the everyday. Prefiguration is empathetic and caring as much as it is destructive and rebellious. It also occurs at the level of the sociocultural (art-making, popular media, libraries, collective social centers) and political (antagonistic internal and external engagement with state and its institutions)—it builds, maintains, and reproduces forms of life that we desire independent of vicious forms of power. Again, in another way: prefiguration is as much about the everyday grind of high school teaching, and engaging public education from within, as it is about autonomous free schools.

And, finally, anarchism is about doing all of this on our own and with each other, against co-optation by the state and capitalism. It is about collective autonomy and building popular power against all that we hate and for all that we love. –The Cronut

"The Coming Anarchist Consensus" Cont...

information? Or safety from violence and violation? (substitute any other fundamental right to make the point clearer).
If you accept this point, a natural corollary emerges: if every person has the same inherent worth and value and rights as any other, no one should have the power or authority to control another's actions or limit another's rights unless it is in self defense of one's own inherent rights—if, for example, a person threatens your right to safety, and you have no recourse but to resort to violence to stop them. If someone is granted more than such self-defensive power, they will be able to arbitrarily restrict the rights and freedoms of others for their own unequal gain.

Borrowing from Noam Chomsky, then, the anarchist claim is that any form of power or authority must constantly be interrogated. If it cannot prove itself indispensable—if it isn't able to show that without it, things would be much worse than they are now—it must be dismantled and replaced with something freer, more horizontal, and more democratic.

Which leads full circle to what we claimed in Part 1 of this piece, featured in the Winter 2014 issue. In Part 1, we argued that a growing body of evidence from an array of primarily social sciences and humanities disciplines was leading to the inescapable conclusion that most of the justifications commonly provided for hierarchical structures like prisons, courts, militaries, police forces, corporations, and states are illegitimate. That is, it cannot be proven that these structures are needed to keep people prosperous, healthy, happy, and safe. In fact, quite the opposite—these structures are responsible for the vast majority of human pain and suffering, both mental and physical.

We further alleged that this growing body of evidence in fact seems to amount to a "cumulative argument" for the anarchist/anti-authoritarian position. Just as no simple argument of the form "2 + 2 = 4" can be cited to prove that life evolves or that human-made carbon dioxide emissions are driving climate change, and no single observation flatly and undeniably confirms the evolutionary or anthropogenic models, no single statement of a priori logic or solitary empirical observation can convert a skeptical mind to the anarchist cause. Nevertheless, just as in the case of climate change or evolution, we assert that an emerging body of evidence, taken cumulatively, makes the truth of certain key anarchist claims virtually undeniable.

In the paragraphs that follow, we will trace the outlines of this body of evidence. Of course, we do not claim to present the argument in its entirety. That would take a book, one which we may very well attempt to write (in fact, if you'd like to collaborate on such a scholarly effort, something of the interdisciplinary breadth and depth of Ryan and Jetha's *Sex at Dawn*, please contact us at catullus1984@riseup.net). In the meantime, think of the following not as the proverbial elephant, but as some disconnected impressions of its features—the flat ears, the sharp tusks, the round legs—which future work will help stitch together into a coherent image of the whole.

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What is Anarchism?

Anarchy is a political theory which prescribes a way to organize our social structures. Its conclusions on social organization are largely derived from principles and desires – the principle of equality and justice combined with the desire for freedom--not just for one's self, but for others too. At its most basic, anarchy proposes that a society without social hierarchies fulfills these principles and desires better than any other proposed social structures. It proposes an ideal to reach for which drives an incessant critique of current social practice as well as a practice that puts that critique into political action.
Also, we give people free food, organize pot lucks, and are generally groovy and happy folk who live by the principles of solidarity – because if we didn't, we'd all surely already be dead. We aren't exactly renowned for being well liked. –Dick Dick

What is Anarchism?

Anarchism as a verb: Anarchism is a movement against oppression and exploitation and for freedom and well-being for everyone and everything on this planet. Unlike the aims of the state, which wants everything to remain the same and to protect the owners' privileges and power at the expense of others, anarchism is constantly dynamic because people and environments are dynamic and it does not undervalue, neglect, or ignore the life, skills, and worth of any individual. People and their circumstances guide anarchism to ensure that no issue, concern, or need is marginalized. Anarchists govern themselves through autonomous, voluntary, inclusive decision-making processes, creating direct and personal relationships with others based on love. One of the purposes of anarchism is to eradicate the institutions and systems which divide us, oppress us, kill us, and only benefit a select few; it is against the arbitrarily constructed divisions made by capitalism, the state, patriarchy, imperialism, white supremacy, speciesism, heteronormativity, or any institutional mechanism with the purpose of undermining someone's worth for someone else's advantage.

Anarchists acknowledge, are accountable to, and respond to their impediments and work on improving, constantly improving, in order to meet everyone's needs to live a dignified life.

"Liberty is like the morning. There are those who wait sleeping for it to arrive, but there are those who sleep little and walk throughout the night to reach it." - Subcomandante Marcos of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) –MD5

Postanarchism: Neither *post*-anarchism nor post-*anarchism*

"Neither the normalization of anarchism nor the depoliticization of theory!" was the rallying cry for the postanarchist position. Unpacking this motto reveals the desire to merge the most subversive elements within anarchism with the critically reflexive theories of poststucturalism and postmodernism. In other words, postanarchism was to be thought neither as the complete transcendence of traditional anarchist theory nor as its complete acceptance, but, as an 'immanent transcendence'…
…Postanarchism began with the assumption that power is a pervasive, multinodal, phenomenon which is both creative and destructive in its operation. As a result, resistance was thought to benefit from a disposal of the reactive, slavish, attitude of *ressentiment*; the assumption was that, following Newman, "there can be no external enemy for us to define ourselves in opposition to and vent our anger on… rather than having an external enemy… in opposition to which one's political identity is formed, we must work on [the other within] ourselves."
Postanarchism was therefore a reaction to the premises of an anarchism which positioned itself against any single (or series of) place(s) from which power unidirectionally emanates. Conversely, postanarchism is a painstakingly reflexive variant of anarchist theory which, like a good friend of mine, rarely stops for the night to take a rest. As Andrew Koch put it, "[f]rom the assumption of a transcendent unity of thought, whether as the 'doctrine of forms' or as things in themselves, the idea of political unity rests its foundation on [the] epistemological doctrine [of modernity]."All of the postanarchist thinkers whose work has so often been criticized have quite explicitly adopted this perspective. None are more clear than Newman who, in his pivotal book *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*, remarked,
".. poststructuralism does not see itself as a stage beyond modernity, but rather a critique conducted upon the limits of modernity. Poststructuralism *operates* within the discourse of modernity to expose its limits and unmask its problems and paradoxes… we must work at the limits of modernity, and maintain a critical attitude, not only toward modernity itself, but toward any discourse which claims to transcend it."
Since postanarchism is a reworking of anarchist theory in light of poststructuralist offerings, it would seem permissible that postanarchism, far from being characterized as a simple transcendence of classical and modern anarchism, operates necessarily within these discourses such that the appeal or spirit that characterized these periods in anarchist thought might continue on to influence the contemporary period. Adams compared this approach to the postmarxism of Laclau & Mouffee: "[w]hile it is *post*-anarchist it is also post-*anarchist*; in other words it is not a complete rejection of classical anarchism but rather a step beyond the limits defined for it by Enlightenment thought." The emphasis remains somewhere in between the two rather than frozen upon any single pole.
The postanarchists have outlined, in each their own way, what they saw as the worthwhile commitments of traditional anarchism, thus emphasizing their indebtedness and attachment to traditional anarchism. Todd May, in his earliest work on the topic, concluded: "[t]hus poststructuralist theory is indeed anarchist [and] is in fact more consistently anarchist than traditional anarchist theory has proven to

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"Postanarchism" cont...

be." Adams likewise admitted that "[the postanarchists may] not explicitly identify with anarchism as a tradition so much as they identify with its spirit." It is this spirit or defining attitude, among a variety of others, which remains and assumes a more serious form within the postanarchist assemblage. May, for example, has argued that what unites poststructuralist and anarchist political philosophies "is the denial that there is some central hinge about which political change could or should revolve." Newman, himself the target of most of the debate, also found something within classical anarchist thought to be attractive:

"[All forms of anarchism] are united, however, by a fundamental rejection and critique of political authority in all its forms. The critique of political authority — the conviction that power is oppressive, exploitative and dehumanizing — may be said to be the crucial politicoethical standpoint of anarchism."

And Lewis Call revealed his admiration for one of the prevailing anarchist attitudes: "Anarchism, which is by its very nature sceptical of fixed structures, is a far more fluid and flexible theory [than others]. [It] continues to provide the most effective and compelling critique of all varieties of state power. And because it is such a flexible body of theory, anarchism is perhaps better suited than any other political philosophy to articulate the critiques which must be spoken in our rapidly fluctuating postmodern world."

Finally, it can no longer be said that the postanarchists have not clearly expressed their indebtedness to traditional anarchist theory and thus spoken of their reliance on it; indeed, the postanarchists have always found themselves, in one way or another, within the anarchist tradition rather than outside of it. Indeed, it may be argued that the postanarchists occupy a position which is at the outermost inside of the tradition.

At this point I would suggest that it would be more fruitful to describe anarchism as an attitude of hostility in the face of all forms of representation, the least of which may be political or conceptual; or, as an assemblage of often contradictory attitudes held that interrogates representations along a variety of nodal points. Traditional anarchism can now be summarized as a specific attitudinal assemblage held in tendency, among others, within the larger anarchist assemblage, which, according to the postanarchist critique, holds a number of problematic assumptions. The most significant of these assumptions is that power derives from a particular place (the State), is an objective phenomenon, and emanates outward to repress an otherwise creative human essence. Postanarchism can be understood as the result of a paradigm shift within anarchist theory itself which emerged somewhere after the middle of the century and is associated with the failed/lost social movements of the time. Far from a mere overnight transformation of politics and far from a wholesale rejection of all anarchist theory in the past, postanarchism is simply another term for what has always already been going on within the anarchist movement. The purpose for finally giving it a name is twofold: on the one hand, it is a safeguard to combat dogmatic impositions, to keep anarchist theory fresh and exciting.

On the other hand, it represents an attempt to be critical of this very purity, to put into question the unique position which some anarchists claim to hold. The presumption is that there is something worth retaining in anarchist thought and practice and that there is still room for movement within its discourse, but certain other attitudes, those associated with the modernist perspective, must be interrogated. Added to this is the belief that this space which allows for movement, narrow as it may be, is nonetheless vital in a world dominated by alluring apparatuses of power. The promise of postanarchism, as Koch puts it, "derives from the deconstruction of any concept that makes oppression appear rational," whether in the name of anarchism or in the name of justice, the principle question which postanarchism asks, *a la* Foucault, is: "[h]ow does one keep from being a fascist, even (especially) when one believes oneself to be a revolutionary militant?"

To summarize my main points for this section: postanarchism is a specific assemblage of attitudes that does not so much come after modern anarchism but which is a reaction to the promises that have characterized the modern anarchist attitude. That postanarchism is a changing of a mixture of attitudes, rather than a simple transcendence of anarchism, should not be glossed over. While one might suppose there to be attitudes which are specific to modern lines of argumentation, attitudes which are not carried over into postmodern lines of argumentation, this does not necessarily mean that *some* of the former attitudes are not retained in the latter. Within each of these assemblages there can be found linkages; for example, the central attitude that characterized modern anarchism, arguably, was a commitment to hostility in the face of representation, it is precisely this attitude that appears to have transferred over to the postanarchist assemblage with the added supplement of extreme reflexivity within a broader political terrain.

—From "Postanarchism is Not What You Think" by Saint Schmidt (http://goo.gl/nTV9sG)

What is Anarchism? (An Urban Planner's Perspective)

In its commonly understood meaning, anarchism is the knowledge of, and subsequent rejection of, systemic control that is superimposed over humanity's reality. The clustering of people in urban spaces has seen the maximization of control methods, as well as the opportunities of integrated networks of resistance and alternative life choices. Much is written about how since 2007 or 2008 the world population has crossed the threshold for the first time of a majority residing in urban regions. Large-scale thinking often dilutes the human beings who make up this statistic, and contemporary urban studies coursework often strays toward the dark side of theory in this implication. It is my sincere wish to explore the positive ontological urbanism that seeks new methods to prepare for uncertainty, while incorporating practices of re-interpretation through anarchist urbanism.

I have been fascinated and in love with cities from an early age. The city was a place of excitement and stimulation with the whole of human achievement and failure on display. As I grew, my understanding of the depth of urban places grew as I confronted a more complicated and unexpected urban ecology. Aside from notions of "chaos" (continuous co-creation), as well as work-centric revolutionary movements, my understanding of anarchism came to be clarified through fundamentally knowing it as humanity's collective impulse toward organic cohesion from compassion. In Buddhist philosophy, it is said that human beings are aggregates of causes and conditions. It can be said that a city is also an aggregate of causes and conditions, since it is an aggregate of people. With this in mind, the city's mysteries unravel and the human element is clarified. It is therefore my sincere wish to further understand the phenomena of urbanity, the intersection of all human outcomes. I make no illusory fog of conceit, but I humbly aspire to a position of participation in critical urban discourse.

In the United States, there is a continuous oscillation between the social and individual dimensions of freedom. Personal and social solidarity in the urban realm can be met with ecumenical association. The language of urban epistemology has made a tremendous improvement in my way of knowing spatial elements. What used to seem chaotic and primordial is in fact made readable as I navigate "command and control centers" and "zones of encounter" with the lexicon passed on to me from urban planning professors. The city becomes an open air museum and Exploratorium with 1950s Urban Renewal projects, festive consumption, ethnic enclaves, organic everyday urbanism of street vendors and guerilla bicycle sharrows, 1980s L.A. School Latino Urbanism, and contemporary gentrified arts districts. Human creation often is reduced to commodities or measured in productivity or exchange value, but it is the communion of human minds from a team of co-operative freegans, backyard bee-keepers, or the simple volition of sharing with someone in need that is the anarchist act. It is said that knowledge is peace. With this in mind, I am seeking peace through learning.
—Vicente Oswaldo Arellano

"Is Anarchism Pacifist?" cont...

legitimate defense and, consequently, his violence against the boss, against the oppressor, is always morally justifiable." [Op. Cit., p. 55 and pp. 53-54] Moreover, they stress that, to use the words of Bakunin, since social oppression "stems far less from individuals than from the organization of things and from social positions" anarchists aim to "ruthlessly destroy positions and things" rather than people, since the aim of an anarchist revolution is to see the end of privileged classes "not as individuals, but as classes." [quoted by Richard B. Saltman, *The Social and Political Thought of Michael Bakunin* p. 121, p. 124 and p. 122]

Indeed, the question of violence is relatively unimportant to most anarchists, as they do not glorify it and think that it should be kept to a minimum during any social struggle or revolution. All anarchists would agree with the Dutch pacifist anarcho-syndicalist Bart de Ligt when he argued that "the violence and warfare which are characteristic conditions of the capitalist world do not go with the liberation of the individual, which is the historic mission of the exploited classes. The greater the violence, the weaker the revolution, even where violence has deliberately been put at the service of the revolution." [*The Conquest of Violence*, p. 75]

Similarly, all anarchists would agree with de Ligt on, to use the name of one of his book's chapters, "the absurdity of bourgeois pacifism." For de Ligt, and all anarchists, violence is inherent in the capitalist system and any attempt to make capitalism pacifistic is doomed to failure. This is because, on the one hand, war is often just economic competition carried out by other means. Nations often go to war when they face an economic crisis, what they cannot gain in economic struggle they attempt to get by conflict. On the other hand, "violence is indispensable in modern society. . . [because] without it the ruling class would be completely unable to maintain its privileged position with regard to the exploited masses in each country. The army is used first and foremost to hold down the workers. . . when they become discontented." [Bart de Ligt, Op. Cit., p. 62] As long as the state and capitalism exist, violence is inevitable and so, for anarcho-pacifists, the consistent pacifist must be an anarchist just as the consistent anarchist must be a pacifist.

For those anarchists who are non-pacifists, violence is seen as an unavoidable and unfortunate result of oppression and exploitation as well as the only means by which the privileged classes will renounce their power and wealth. Those in authority rarely give up their power and so must be forced. Hence the need for "transitional" violence "to put an end to the far greater, and permanent, violence which keeps the majority of mankind in servitude." [Malatesta, Op. Cit., p. 55]…

…So, to sum up, anarchists who are pure pacifists are rare. Most accept the use of violence as a necessary evil and advocate minimizing its use. All agree that a revolution which institutionalizes violence will just recreate the state in a new form. They argue, however, that it is not authoritarian to destroy authority or to use violence to resist violence. Therefore, although most anarchists are not pacifists, most reject violence except in self-defense and even then kept to the minimum.

The Exquisite Rebel

Voltairine de Cleyre (1866-1912), although lesser known than her sister-in-struggle Emma Goldman, was an influential American anarchist and feminist writer, organizer, and rebel. A proud promoter of "anarchism without adjectives," Voltairine, in her relatively short life, wrote dozens of articles on left-wing topics ranging from racial equality and women's rights to anti-militarism and anti-capitalism. She was also a poet, well-known for her powerful command of the English language in both verse and prose. We reproduce some selections from her work as part of our musings on the nature of Anarchism.—Black Flag Editors

"If this is the price to be paid for an idea, then let us pay. There is no need of being troubled about it, afraid, or ashamed. This is the time to boldly say, 'Yes, I believe in the displacement of this system of injustice by a just one; I believe in the end of starvation, exposure, and the crimes caused by them; I believe in the human soul regnant over all laws which man has made or will make; I believe there is no peace now, and there will never be peace, so long as one rules over another; I believe in the total disintegration and dissolution of the principle and practice of authority; I am an Anarchist, and if for this you condemn me, I stand ready to receive your condemnation."— Voltairine de Cleyre, *Exquisite Rebel: The Essays of Voltairine de Cleyre—Anarchist, Feminist, Genius*

On raising children:
"Look how your children grow up. Taught from their earliest infancy to curb their love natures — restrained at every turn! Your blasting lies would even blacken a child's kiss. Little girls must not be tomboyish, must not go barefoot, must not climb trees, must not learn to swim, must not do anything they desire to do which Madame Grundy has decreed 'improper.' Little boys are laughed at as effeminate, silly girl-boys if they want to make patchwork or play with a doll. Then when they grow up, 'Oh! Men don't care for home or children as women do!' Why should they, when the deliberate effort of your life has been to crush that nature out of them. 'Women can't rough it like men.' Train any animal, or any plant, as you train your girls, and it won't be able to rough it either."

14. Voltairine de Cleyre, Philadelphia, August 1898

Her last poem, inspired by Ricardo Flores Magon and the Mexican anarchists:
Written - in - Red
To Our Living Dead in Mexico's Struggle

Written in red their protest stands,
For the gods of the World to see;
On the dooming wall their bodiless hands
Have blazoned "Upharsin," and flaring brands
Illumine the message: "Seize the lands!
Open the prisons and make men free!"
Flame out the living words of the dead
Written - in - red.

Gods of the World! Their mouths are dumb!
Your guns have spoken and they are dust.
But the shrouded Living, whose hearts were numb,
Have felt the beat of a wakening drum
Within them sounding - the Dead men's tongue -
Calling: "Smite off the ancient rust!"
Have beheld "Resurrexit," the word of the Dead,
Written - in - red.

Bear it aloft, O roaring, flame!
Skyward aloft, where all may see.
Slaves of the World! Our cause is the same;
One is the immemorial shame;
One is the struggle, and in One name -
Manhood - we battle to set men free.
"Uncurse us the Land!" burn the words of the Dead,
Written - in - red.

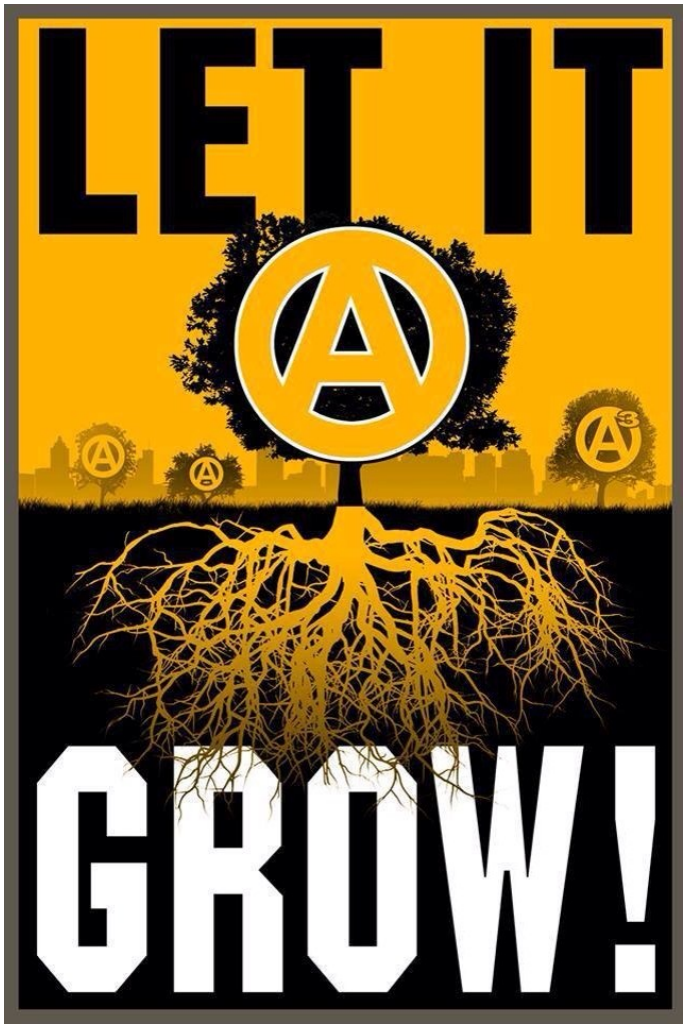
—Voltairine de Cleyre

"The Coming Anarchist Consensus" Cont...

Fact #1: There is evidence that systems of hierarchy and inequality are bad for everyone

- In 2011, Dr. Nathanael Fast at USC along with colleagues Nir Halevy of Stanford and Adam Galinsky of Northwestern published psychological research suggesting that "many quite ordinary people will succumb to bad behavior if the circumstances are right" (The Economist, Oct. 1, 2011). Specifically, they studied the "little Hitler" pattern of behavior in which a person becomes cruel and abusive as a result of being granted a position "low in status but high in power."

- Other research by Dr. Galinsky has shown that being placed in a position of power actually causes people to lose their ability to empathize with others, lose their ability to correctly identify what others are thinking and feeling, objectify people (e.g. objectify workers as mere producers or women as mere sex objects), and act with self-interest at the expense of others' well-being. Dacher Keltner, a social psychologist at UC Berkeley, found results similar to Galinsky's: "Keltner once had groups of three people sit before a bowl that contained five cookies, and each volunteer took one. That left two cookies. By mutual agreement, the volunteers always left the last cookie in the bowl. So who took the fourth cookie? Invariably, Keltner found, the person in the group who had been randomly assigned to feel powerful rudely grabbed the fourth cookie. 'We videotaped how they ate,' Keltner said, laughing. 'The high-powered person ate with their mouth open, cookie crumbs falling all over their shirt.'" (The Washington Post, Nov. 26th, 2007)



- Further research by Keltner finds that in hierarchical social groups, power tends to be granted to those who are best at forging social relationships, those who are most empathetic, most altruistic, most kind, and, therefore, most popular. However, once granted their privileged position, power, as Lord Acton famously warned, corrupts: "'It's an incredibly consistent effect,' Mr. Keltner says. 'When you give people power, they basically start acting like fools. They flirt inappropriately, tease in a hostile fashion, and become totally impulsive.' Mr. Keltner compares the feeling of power to brain damage, noting that people with lots of authority tend to behave like neurological patients with a damaged orbito-frontal lobe, a brain area that's crucial for empathy and decision-making. Even the most virtuous people can be undone by the corner office." (The Wall Street Journal, August 14, 2010).
- More recent research by Dr. Keltner and his colleague Paul Piff has found that being wealthy makes people more selfish, and to display inconsiderate behavior to others, for example: refusing to stop your car for pedestrians, taking candy from children (literally!), and cheating in games of chance. These antisocial behaviors appear to be a product of attaining wealth; this effect was observed by Keltner and colleagues in people who were made to feel wealthy while playing the boardgame Monopoly (PBS Newshour, June 21, 2013).

- Experiments on obedience to authority conducted by psychologist Stanley Milgram at Yale in the early 1960s are particularly damning to hierarchical systems. Milgram had participants administer a test to actors behind a partition. Whenever the actors made an error (which, by design, they did frequently), the participant had to deliver what they believed was an electric shock to the actor behind the partition. Even as the actor screamed in agony behind the partition, the majority of participants continued to deliver shocks so long as the lab-coated experimenter (an authority figure) goaded them on. Some continued until the actor stopped making sounds at all, simulating death. Milgram had originally been looking for an answer to Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil" dilemma: how could so many ordinary German citizens have participated in the brutal genocide of their Jewish brothers and sisters, people who had been generally well-integrated in German society before the rise of Nazism? What Milgram concluded was that people are generally willing to follow orders, even if these orders mean committing atrocities, as long as (1) the person giving the orders is viewed as "legitimate" authority who is qualified to tell others what to do, and (2) the person being ordered can believe that the authority figure will accept responsibility for what happens. Milgram concluded that this mindset of obedience is a direct consequence of the hierarchical way society is organized. While Milgram seems to have assumed that such forms of organization are inevitable, anarchists reject this assumption as at best unproven, and at worst inconsistent with what we know from history and anthropology.

- The 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment by Dr. Phillip G. Zimbardo illustrates how situations influence individuals to act in ways that are either good or bad. In it, college students were randomly selected to play the role of either prisoners or guards in a simulated prison environment on the Stanford University campus for two weeks. The experiment had to be terminated in just six days because the situation spiraled out of control. In Zimbardo's own words: "Pacifist young men were behaving sadistically in their role of guards, inflicting humiliation and pain and suffering

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"The Coming Anarchist Consensus" Cont…

on other young men if they had the inferior human status of prisoner. Some guards even reported they were enjoying doing so." Zimbardo has argued in the decades since that his experiment, taken along with other social psychology work (like that of Milgram), points to the powerful role institutions play in shaping peoples' behavior. "Good" people can behave very badly, and "bad" people can behave quite humanely, depending on the social circumstances they are thrust into. Zimbardo argues that we ought to organize our social institutions to incentivize social behavior and de-incentivize anti-social behavior.

- Stanford neuroscientist Robert Sapolsky has found that baboons, a highly social primate like humans, suffer extreme stress as a result of being either at the very top or the very bottom of social hierarchies. Having increased stress hormones continually released into the bloodstream can cause a number of chronic health problems; the increased heart rate, switching off of digestive and reproductive functions, and enhancement of certain cognitive functions at the expense of others all caused by stress hormones may be good for fight-or-flight scenarios, but they are extremely unhealthy if experienced for purely psychological reasons over long periods of time. The main negative effects of long-term stress in humans include increased risk of diabetes, heart disease, and cognitive impairment. Although Sapolsky acknowledges that the baboon research may not apply directly to humans, he also points out that the high prevalence of stress-related illnesses in people of low socioeconomic status fits well with the baboon data. More recent research lends further support to Sapolsky's views (The New York Times, July 14, 2011).

- Research by Professor Joris Lammers at Tilburg University in the Netherlands has found that people who wield power over others are 30% more likely to cheat on their spouses than their less-powerful counterparts. Research by Jan Maner of Florida State University found that power makes people overestimate possible benefits of risky behavior (and therefore underestimate possible risks), and to believe that they are more attractive than they really are (and, therefore, more likely to flirt with, or even harass, subordinates). (NPR, Feb. 19, 2014).

- Research by Andy Yap from MIT has found that the larger/roomier car you drive, the more unethical behavior (speeding, cutting off other drivers, failing to signal turns, etc.) you will exhibit. His research brings together two points well-supported by psychological research. The first is that "if you give people even modest amounts of power, it increases the risk that they will act unethically" (Dr. Shankar Vedantam, NPR, August 28th, 2013). Apparently, the roomier the car, the more power a person feels. The second point is that you are more likely to commit ethical behavior if you have no stress (which is likely if you're very wealthy, very powerful, or drive a very roomy/luxurious car) or if you are extremely stressed (which is likely if you're extremely poor and oppressed—or drive a very cramped car). People in between (in terms of stress, and therefore, presumably, in terms of wealth and car size) don't exhibit an elevated risk of unethical behavior.

- Robert Fuller, PhD, writing about "rankism"—discrimination against someone for being of lower rank in a social or other human-made hierarchy—cites work by Robert Knisely in which he states that "For his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins sifted through the 1,435 firms that have ever been in the Fortune 500. He found only 11 firms that demonstrated periods of exceptional performance. Notably, all 11 had CEOs who were humble. 'Humble' is Collins's word, and by it he means a CEO who would listen to anyone, anytime, who might have something to offer to the CEO's quest for success. In other words, these CEOs eliminated every trace of rankism from their work lives – and they, and their companies, won big." (Psychology Today, Jan 28, 2014)

- A 2011 study in The American Journal of Public Health found that in the year 2000, 36% percent of all deaths that occurred in the US were caused by social factors like racial segregation, income inequality, inadequate social services, minimal education, and poverty. For example, "the study attributed 176,000 deaths to racial segregation and 133,000 to individual poverty. The numbers are substantial. For example, looking at direct causes of death, 119,000 people in the United States die from accidents each year,

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Anarchists contradict the system that they live in until it is transformed into a new one. That means we share food every day, not just Christmas or other designated Hallmark holidays. Just as we should celebrate every day of the life of Huey Newton who would have been 72 today! —Alexei Hong FNB (Food Not Bombs) 4 LIFE, submitted on February 17th, 2014

"Anarchists did not try to carry out genocide against the Armenians in Turkey; they did not deliberately starve millions of Ukrainians; they did not create a system of death camps to kill Jews, gypsies, and Slavs in Europe; they did not fire-bomb scores of large German and Japanese cities and drop nuclear bombs on two of them; they did not carry out a 'Great Leap Forward' that killed scores of millions of Chinese; they did not attempt to kill everybody with any appreciable education in Cambodia; they did not launch one aggressive war after another; they did not implement trade sanctions that killed perhaps 500,000 Iraqi children.

In debates between anarchists and statists, the burden of proof clearly should rest on those who place their trust in the state. Anarchy's mayhem is wholly conjectural; the state's mayhem is undeniably, factually horrendous."

(Left) A quote from economist and historian Robert Higgs (transcribed from an address Dr. Higgs gave at Mises University in 2013
See: http://www.lewrockwell.com/podcast/381-the-state-is-too-dangerous-to-tolerate/)

From Chapter XII of *The Conquest of Bread*
By Peter Kropotkin

(See the Anarchy Archives for the complete work: http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/kropotkin/conquest/toc.html)

Authoritarians pretend that it is the almighty employer and his overseers who maintain regularity and quality of work in factories. In reality, in every somewhat complicated enterprise, in which the goods produced pass through many hands before being finished, it is the factory itself, the workmen as a unity, who see to the good quality of the work. Therefore the best factories of British private industry have few overseers, far less on an average than the French factories, and less than the British State factories.

A certain standard of public morals is maintained in the same way. Authoritarians say it is due to rural guards, judges, and policemen, whereas in reality it is maintained *in spite* of judges, policemen, and rural guards. "Many are the laws producing criminals!" was said long ago.

Not only in industrial workshops do things go on in this way; it happens everywhere, every day, on a scale that only bookworms have as yet no notion of. When a railway company, federated with other companies, fails to fulfil its engagements, when its trains are late and goods lie neglected at the stations, the other companies threaten to cancel the contract, and that threat usually suffices.

It is generally believed, at any rate it is taught in State-approved schools, that commerce only keeps to its engagements from fear of lawsuits. Nothing of the sort; nine times in ten the trader who has not kept his word will not appear before a judge. There, where trade is very active, as in London, the sole fact of having driven a creditor to bring a lawsuit suffices for the immense majority of merchants to refuse for good to have any dealings with a man who has compelled one of them to go to law.

This being so, why should means that are used to-day among workers in the workshop, traders in the trade, and railway companies in the organization of transport, not be made use of in a society based on voluntary work?

Take, for example, an association stipulating that each of its members should carry out the following contract: "We undertake to give you the use of our houses, stores, streets, means of transport, schools, museums, etc., on condition that, from twenty to forty-five or fifty years of age, you consecrate four or five hours a day to some work recognized as necessary to existence. Choose yourself the producing groups which you wish to join, or organize a new group, provided that it will undertake to produce necessaries. And as for the remainder of your time, combine together with whomsoever you like, for recreation, art, or science, according to the bent of your taste.

"Twelve or fifteen hundred hours of work a year, in one of the groups producing food, clothes, or houses, or employed in public sanitation, transport, and so on, is all we ask of you. For this amount of work we guarantee to you the free use of all that these groups produce, or will produce. But if not one, of the thousands of groups of our federation, will receive you, whatever be their motive; if you are absolutely incapable of producing anything useful, or if you refuse to do it, then live like an isolated man or like an invalid. If we are rich enough to give you the necessaries of life we shall be delighted to give them to you. You are a man, and you have the right to live. But as you wish to live under special conditions, and leave the ranks, it is more than probable that you will suffer for it in your daily relations with other citizens. You will be looked upon as a ghost of bourgeois society, unless some friends of yours, discovering you to be a talent, kindly free you from all moral obligation towards society by doing all the necessary work for you.

"And finally, if it does not please you, go and look for other conditions elsewhere in the wide world, or else seek adherents and organize with them on novel principles. We prefer our own."

This is what could be done in a communal society in order to turn away sluggards if they became too numerous.

Try to forgive the use of heteronormative male -gendered nouns in this classic essay by the great Ukrainian anarchist luminary—it was, after all, the early 20th century, and the movement has learned a lot (at least some of it has!) since then. –Black Flag editors.

The Anarchist Revolution by Nestor Makhno

(Excerpted and adapted from https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/makhno-nestor/works/anarchist-revolution.htm)

1. ANARCHISM—a life of freedom and creative independence for humanity.

Anarchism does not depend on theory or programs, which try to grasp man's life in its entirety. It is a teaching, which is based on real life, which outgrows all artificial limitations, which cannot be constricted by any system.

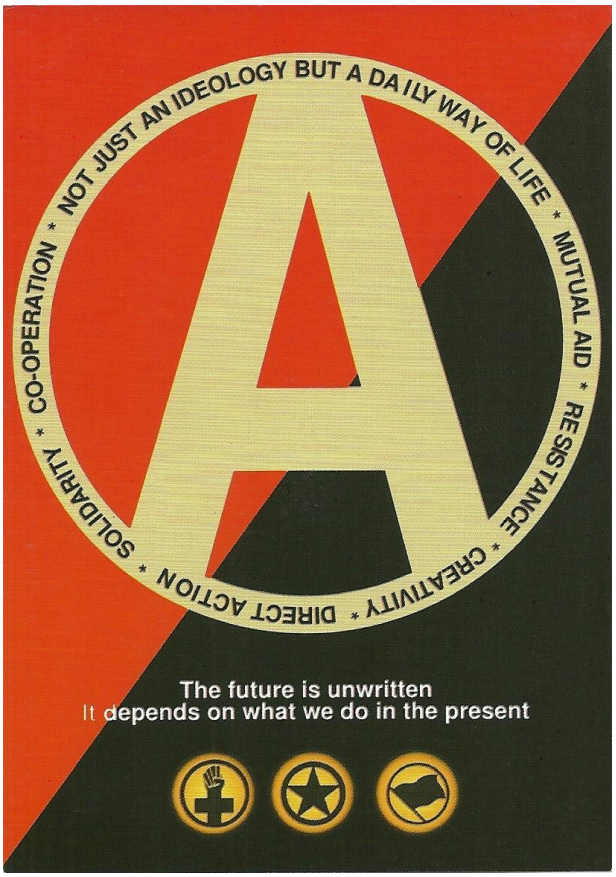
Anarchism's outward form is a free, non-governed society, which offers freedom, equality and solidarity for its members. Its foundations are to be found in man's sense of mutual responsibility, which has remained unchanged in all places and times. This sense of responsibility is capable of securing freedom and social justice for all men by its own unaided efforts. It is also the foundation of true communism.

Anarchism therefore is a part of human nature, communism its logical extension.

This led to the necessity of formulating anarchism's basic theories by the use of factual material and by systematized analysis. Some people (enemies of freedom, enemies of solidarity) were to try and conceal anarchism's truths or to slander its ideals; others (fighters for man's right to lead a proper life) were to develop and clarify this ideal. I think that Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, Most, Kropotkin, Malatesta, S. Faure, and others never believed, that they could harness anarchism, a framework of immutable scientific dogma, by their theories. Instead, the teachings of anarchism represent a concerted effort to show its roots in human nature, and to prove that man's creative achievements never deviate from it; anarchism's fundamental trait, the negation of all bondage and servitude, is likewise to be found in human nature.

Anarchism means freedom; socialism cannot destroy chains or bondage…

…Anarchism plays a considerable role in the enrichment of human life, a fact recognized by the oppressors as well as by the oppressed. The oppressors do their best to distort the ideal of anarchism; the others do their best to carry it further. Modern civilization has succeeded in making anarchism ever more prominent for both masters and slaves, but has never been able to lull or extinguish this fundamental protest of human nature, for it has been unable to stamp out the independent intellects who have proven that God does not exist. Once this has been proven it was easy to draw back the veil which hides the artificiality of the priesthood and the hierarchies which it supports…



…The idea of anarchism, the teaching of a renewed life for man as an individual and as a social being, is therefore bound up with man's self-awareness and his awareness of the suppurating sore of injustice in modern society. Anarchism exists therefore only illegally or semi-legally, never in total legality.

In the modern world, society does not live for itself but for the preservation of the Master/Slave relationship, the State. One could go further and say that society has completely de-personalized itself. In human terms, it does not exist at all. It is widely believed however that the State is Society. But is "Society" a group of men who live it up while sitting on the shoulders of all humanity? Why is man as an individual or as a mass numbering hundreds of millions nothing in comparison with this slothful group of "political leaders"? These hyenas, rulers both of right and left wing, are rightly upset with the idea of anarchism. The bourgeois at least are frank about this. But state-socialists of all denominations, including Bolsheviks, are busy swapping the names of bourgeois rule with those of their own invention, while leaving its structure essentially unchanged. They are therefore trying to salvage the Master/Slave relationship with all its contradictions. And although they are aware that these contradictions are totally irreconcilable with their professional ideas, they nevertheless uphold them in order to forestall the putting into practice of Anarchist Communism. In their programs, the state-socialists said that man must be allowed to free himself "socially". But of man's spiritual freedom, of his human freedom, no word was spoken. Instead, they are now making sure that such a liberation of man outside their tutelage cannot be carried through. "Liberation" under the management of any government or political set-up - what's that got to do with freedom? The bourgeois, who never applies himself to the task of making anything beautiful or useful, says to the worker: "Once a slave, always a slave. We cannot reform social life because we have got too much capital in industry and in agriculture. Besides, modern life is pleasant for us; all the kings, presidents, and their governments cater for our wishes and bow before us. The slaves are their responsibility." Or he says: "The life of our modern society is full of great promises!"…

…This is the cry of the anarchist revolutionary to the exploited. Rebel, destroy all government and see that it never takes root again. Power is used by those who have never really lived by the work of their hands. Government power will never let workers tread the road to freedom; it is the instrument of the lazy who want to dominate others, and it does not matter if the power is in the hand of the bourgeois, the socialists or the Bolsheviks, it is degrading. There is no government without teeth, teeth to tear any man who longs for a free and just life.

Brother; drive out power in yourself. Never let it fascinate you or your brothers. A true collective life is not built with programs or with governments but with the freedom of mankind, with its creativity and its

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"The Coming Anarchist Consensus" Cont...

and 156,000 from lung cancer" (New York Times, July 4, 2011).

Clearly, these examples point to the damning conclusion that unequal, hierarchical, and authoritarian systems of social organization just don't create the kind of society anyone wants to live in—power corrupts those who possess it, and leads to unnecessary pain, inefficiency, unfairness, and even death. But all over the world people are organized into hierarchical states, and trade in capitalist markets, that by design concentrate wealth, power, and privilege in the hands of an elite few (the one percent, the ruling class, the business elite, the aristocracy—pick your label, it's basically the same thing). What's the alternative?

Fact#2: There exist models, both now and in the past, for organizing society along non-hierarchical, egalitarian Lines

Just to be direct, we're not talking about the disastrous, so-called-"Marxist" dictatorships of the 20th-century.

To make this point clear, and to illustrate the wide range of anarchist models we can look to, I will defer to this hypothetical exchange that David Graeber includes in his fascinating little book *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004):

"**Skeptic**: Well, I might take this whole anarchism idea more seriously if you could give me some reason to think it would work. Can you name me a single viable example of a society which has existed without a government?

Anarchist: Sure. There have been thousands. I could name a dozen just off the top of my head: the Bororo, the Baining, the Onondaga, the Wintu, the Ema, the Tallensi, the Vezo...

Skeptic: But those are all a bunch of primitives! I'm talking about anarchism in a modern, technological society.

Anarchist: Okay, then. There have been all sorts of successful experiments: experiments with worker's self-management, like Mondragon; economic projects based on the idea of the gift economy, like Linux; all sorts of political organizations based on consensus and direct democracy...

Skeptic: Sure, sure, but these are small, isolated examples. I'm talking about whole societies.

Anarchist: Well, it's not like people haven't tried. Look at the Paris Commune, the revolution in Republican Spain...

Skeptic: Yeah, and look what happened to those guys! They all got killed!"

Adding two other examples to this list—anarchist Ukraine (sometimes referred to as "Makhnovist" Ukraine), 1917-1921, and today's non-hierarchical, no-bosses system of corporate organization called "holacracy" being adopted by some companies like Zappos—creates a broad and varied sample of the anarchist possibilities that have existed, and exist, in the world. It is also worth noting, while we're on the subject, that liberated regions of Spain, 1933-36, included both agricultural and industrial cooperatives, organized along generally communist lines. The interested reader is invited to research these anarchist moments themselves, or to contact us (faacollective@gmail.com OR faacollective@riseup.net), since we don't have sufficient space here to review the last thousand years of libertarian history.

In any case, Graeber's dialogue here reveals a critical point: the best attempts at forming anarchist societies in the modern world have all been brutally suppressed for the very reason that they presented a viable alternative to elite, hierarchical power (because, if they didn't, there would be little need to brutally suppress them). Make no mistake: these social experiments did not implode under their own internal contradictions nor did they degrade into warring mini-states or brutal Hobbesian dystopias. They were simply surrounded, outnumbered, and outgunned by the capitalist/statist masters of war. This key observation echoes David Schweickart's point, quoted in the first installment of this series, that capitalism hasn't persisted because it is the best possible system, or even from an absence of alternatives. It persists because those who benefit from it have proven too powerful, thus far, to be overthrown. This was also true for feudalism, slavery, colonialism, and apartheid—until the day that it wasn't.

In the next issue, and the final installment of this series, we will look more closely at some anarchist models, put them in the context of the current environmental crisis, and show how anarchism may be our only hope to retain an advanced society and still achieve a sustainable relationship with Nature. We say this without hyperbole, backed up by the weight of the cumulative argument we are outlining, and confident in our knowledge that a movement which seeks to maximize peace, prosperity, and liberty and to minimize inequality, oppression, and exploitation cannot, in the final analysis, be wrong.

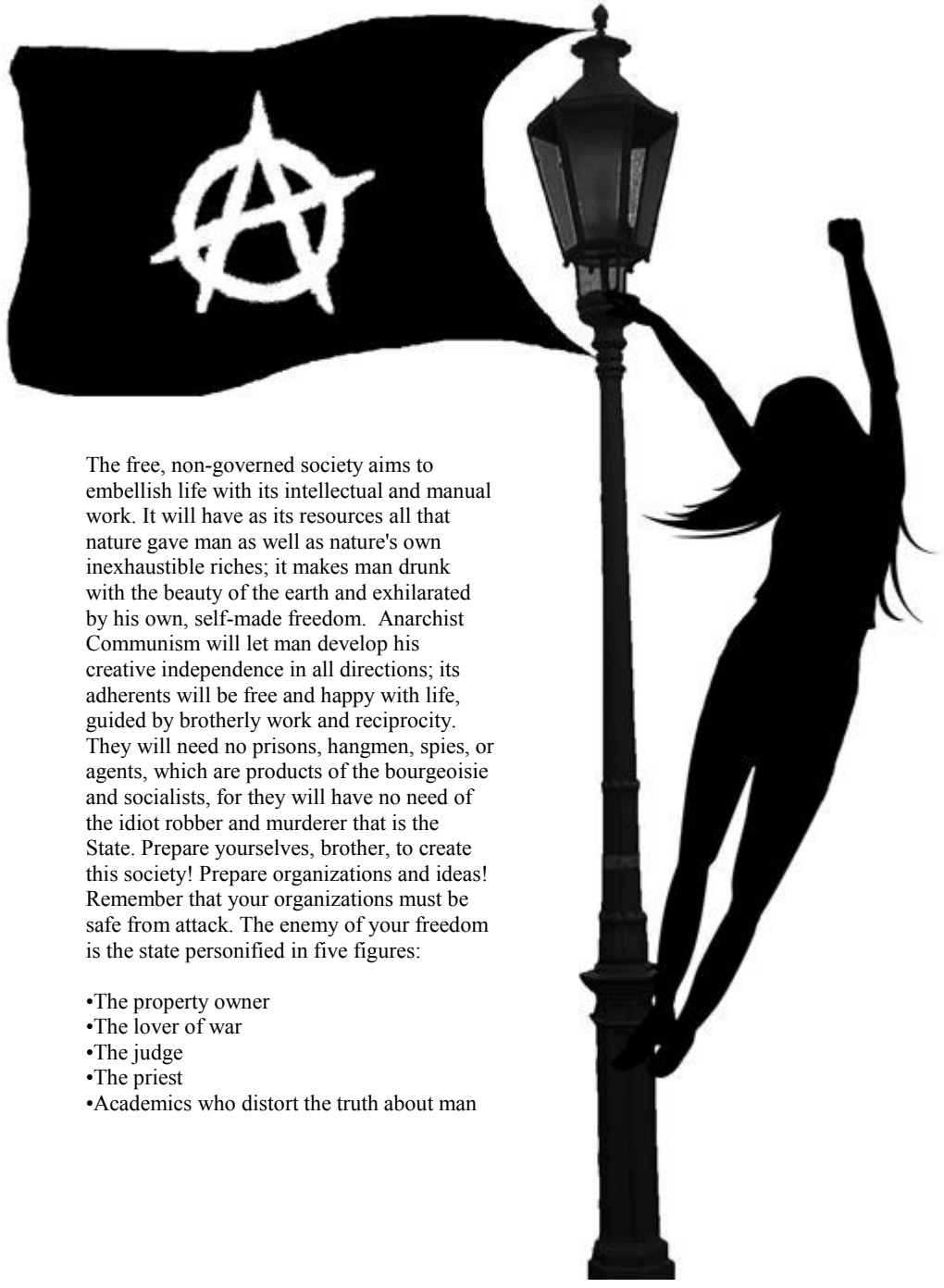
— Your Humble Black Flag Editor

"The Anarchist Revolution" cont...

independence.

The freedom of any individual carries within it the seed of a free and complete community without government, a free society that lives in organic and decentralized totality, united in its pursuit of the great human goal: Anarchist Communism!

2. Anarchistic Communism is a great community in total harmony. It is formed voluntarily by free individuals who form associations and federations according to their needs. Anarchist Communism fights to secure man's freedom and his right to boundless development; it fights against all the evils and injustices that are inherent in governments.



The free, non-governed society aims to embellish life with its intellectual and manual work. It will have as its resources all that nature gave man as well as nature's own inexhaustible riches; it makes man drunk with the beauty of the earth and exhilarated by his own, self-made freedom. Anarchist Communism will let man develop his creative independence in all directions; its adherents will be free and happy with life, guided by brotherly work and reciprocity. They will need no prisons, hangmen, spies, or agents, which are products of the bourgeoisie and socialists, for they will have no need of the idiot robber and murderer that is the State. Prepare yourselves, brother, to create this society! Prepare organizations and ideas! Remember that your organizations must be safe from attack. The enemy of your freedom is the state personified in five figures:

•The property owner
•The lover of war
•The judge
•The priest
•Academics who distort the truth about man

These last make up "historical laws" and "judiciary norms", and scribble slickly in order to get money; they are busy all the time trying to prove the rightfulness of the first four's claims to power that degrades human life.

The enemy is strong. For millennia he has spent his time accumulating experience in robbery, violence, expropriation, and murder. He underwent an inner crisis and is now busy changing his outward aspect, but he is only doing this because his life has been threatened with the new, emerging knowledge. This new knowledge is waking man from his long sleep, freeing him from prejudices implanted by the five, giving him a weapon to fight for his true society. This change in the outer appearance of our enemy can be seen in reformism. It was evolved to combat the revolution in which he took part. In the Russian Revolution, the five seemed to have vanished off the face of the earth. .. but this was only appearance. In reality our enemy changed his features momentarily and is now calling up new recruits to fight against us. Bolshevik communism is especially revealing in this matter; but it will be a long time before this doctrine will forget man's struggle for true freedom.

The only reliable method for waging a successful struggle against enslavement is social revolution that engages the masses in a continual struggle (evolution). When it first erupts, social revolution is elemental. It flattens the path for its own organizations while smashing any dam that is artificially set against it. These dams in fact only increase its power. Anarchist revolutionaries are already working for this, and any man who is aware of the burden of slavery on himself has a duty to aid the anarchist; at the same time every man should feel responsible to the whole of mankind when he struggles against the five of the State. Every man should also remember that the social revolution will require appropriate methods of realization; that is especially true of the anarchist who is scouting ahead along the road of freedom. During the destructive phase of the revolution, while slavery is being abolished and freedom beginning to spread in an elemental outburst, organization and steadfast methods are essential to secure the gains. In this phase the revolution needs you most urgently. The Russian Revolution, in which anarchists played a considerable role (which they could not carry through because action was denied them), brought home to us the truth that the masses who have torn themselves loose from their chains had no desire to put on others of a different make. In their revolutionary momentum, they sought immediately for free associations that would only aid their efforts to build up a new community but which would defend them against the enemy. If we look at this process closely, we come to the conclusion that the best method to create new collective freedom is the "Free Soviet" [workers' council]. Proceeding from this conviction, the anarchist revolutionary will call the enslaved to struggle for these free associations. He will believe that social revolution will thus create freedom while smashing slavery altogether. This belief must be cherished and defended. The only people who can possibly provide the defense for this belief are the masses themselves who have made the revolution and who equate their lives with their principles. While the human masses create the revolution they instinctively cast about for free associations and rely on their inherent anarchism; they will uphold above all

Continued on Page 15

"The Anarchist Revolution" cont...

the Free Soviet. As the masses make a revolution they are bound to come upon this themselves and the anarchist must help them formulate this principle.

Economic problems in the free society will be resolved by the producer -consumer co-operatives in which the Free Soviets will act as co-ordinators and clarifiers. The nature of the Free Soviet during the social revolution must be to consolidate the masses' position by urging them to take their rightful inheritance (land, factories, works, mineral and coal mines, shipping, forestry, etc.) into their own hands. While groups according to interest or inclination are formed, the masses will build up an entire social fabric, freely and independently.

The struggle along this road will demand great sacrifice, for it will be the final effort of nearly free man. In this struggle there will be no hesitation, no sentimentality. Life or Death!? This question will stand before every man who considers his rights and those of humanity to be a better life. As the healthy instincts of man will have preponderance, he will embark upon this road to life as victor and creator.

Organize yourselves, brothers, call every man to your ranks. Call him from the factory, from the school; call the students and the learned. It may be that nine out of ten academics will not come to you, or it may happen that they will come in order to deceive you if they are servants of the State's five. But the tenth man will come. He will be your friend and will help you overcome the deceit of the others.

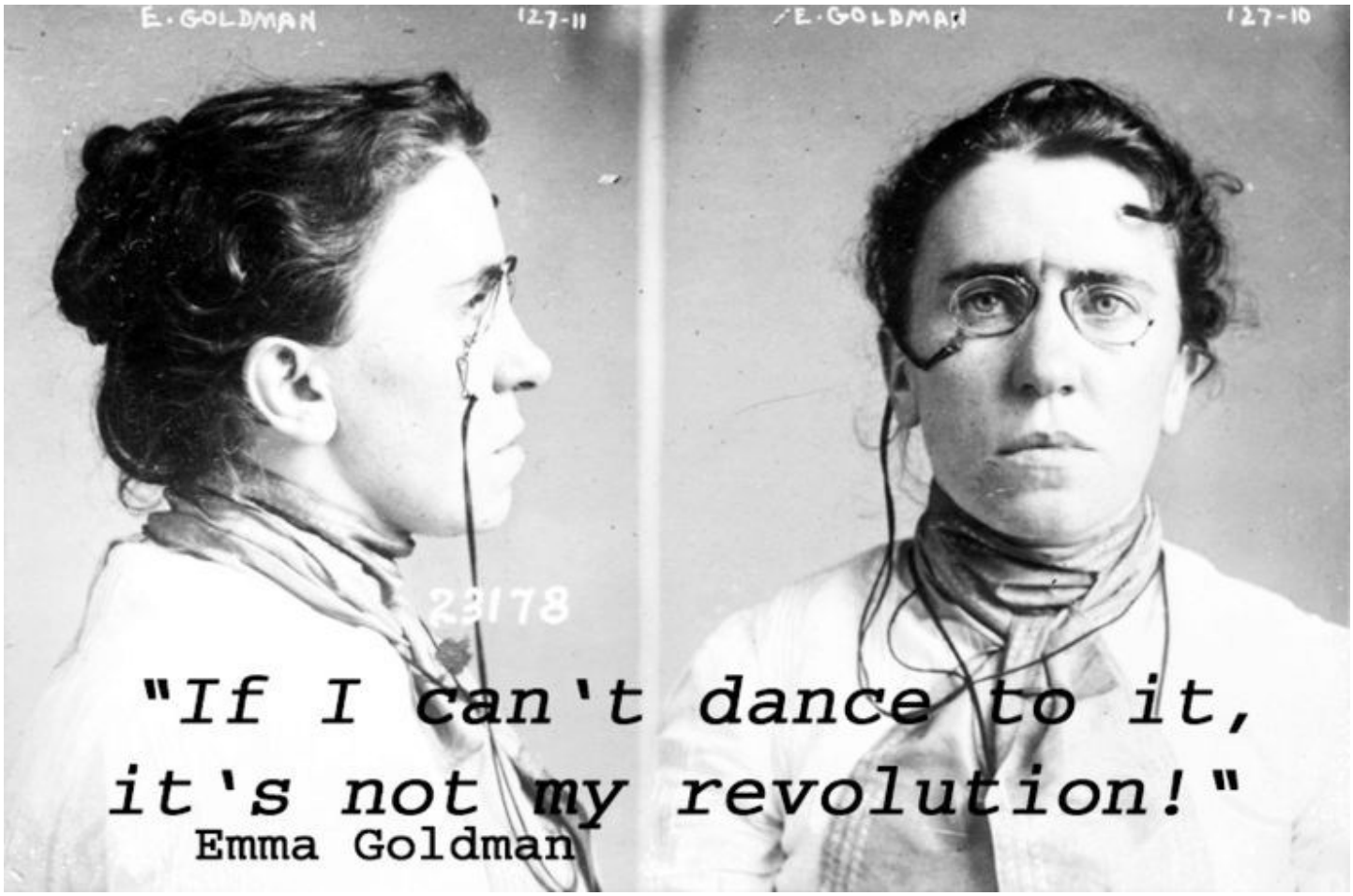
Organize yourselves; call every man to your ranks; call on all the governors to stop their stupidity and the brutalizing of human life. If they do not desist, disarm the police, the army and other organizations of the five's defense. Burn their laws and destroy their prisons, kill the hangmen, the bane of mankind.

Smash authority! Call to your ranks the press-ganged army; there are many killers in the army who are against you and who are bribed to kill you. But there are friends for you even in the army. They will confound the mobs of murderers and will hurry to your side.

After we have collected ourselves into a great, universal family, brothers, we will go further in the fight against darkness. On to the universal human ideal! We will live as brothers, enslaving no one. The brute force of the enemy will be answered with the force by our revolutionary army. If our enemies do not agree with our ideal, we reply by building our new life based on individual responsibility. Only hardened criminals who belong to the five will not wish to tread the road to a new life with fruitful activity. They will try to fight us in order to regain their power. They must die.

Long live the ideal of universal human harmony, and man's fight towards it!

Long live the ideal of anarchist society!



Bl@ck Flag
Published by the Free Association of Anarchists (F@@)
Spring 2014 Volume 9
What is Anarchism? A Special Issue on the Nature and Meaning of Anarchist Thought

What is Anarchism? Contest Winners:
First place: Submission by "The Cronut," p. 4
Runners up: Submissions by Vicente Oswaldo Arellano p. 7 and by "Liberacion" p. 3
All the submissions were good, and we don't mean to create or enforce hierarchies. We simply gave the top honors to those that appealed to our own particular sensibility, especially those who expressed that sensibility in terms that were especially inventive and/or well-stated. It is our hope that all who submitted will keep writing and keep submitting to Black Flag. –Your Humble Black Flag editors.

To Learn More about Anarchy, Anarchism, and Anarchists, F@@ Members recommend:

(These are some of our favorite resources, in addition to all the names dropped earlier, listed in no particular order)

1. A good short video that introduces many points on what anarchism is and what it is not. Incomplete and imperfect, but a reasonably good start: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGYaVBcEgKA

2. "Are You an Anarchist? The Answer May Surprise You" by David Graeber. A very basic intro to the key assumptions of Anarchist thought by the celebrated anarchist anthropologist. http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/david-graeber-are-you-an-anarchist-the-answer-may-surprise-you

3. *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction* by Colin Ward (Oxford UP, 2004). Very useful primer if you know nothing about anarchist thought and history—our collective uses it as a standard first intro. http://libcom.org/library/colin-ward-anarchism-very-short-introduction

4. *Sasha and Emma: The Anarchist Odyssey of Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman* by Paul and Karen Avrich (Belknap Press, 2012). This massive tome is like "crack for anarchists": impossible to put down and impossible to read without feeling radical and pumped up.

5. "Notes on Anarchism" by Noam Chomsky. This historically-motivated introduction to Daniel Guerin's classic text on Anarchism (*Anarchism: From Theory to Practice*, Monthly Review Press, 1970) discusses anarchism's European variants, and puts it in historical context alongside liberalism and Marxism. http://www.chomsky.info/articles/1970----.htm Other favorites of ours include Chomsky's "Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship" (http://www.ditext.com/chomsky/1968.html) and "The Responsibility of Intellectuals" (http://www.chomsky.info/articles/19670223.htm)

6. *Reinventing Anarchy, Again* edited by Howard Ehrlich (AK Press, 2001). A wonderful survey of (fairly) contemporary anarchist essays, covering such topics as anarcha-feminism, anarchist culture, workplace resistance, tactics, and so forth. Everyone interested in anarchism should read it.

7. "Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies (Issue 2013.1): Blasting the Canon." This scholarly but still readable journal includes important debates on the anarchist canon (Is there one? Should there be? Is anarchism a modern movement or has it always existed in some form?) as well as timely re-valuations of Max Stirner and Voltairine de Cleyre.

8. *Breaking the Manacles: An Anti-Patriarchy Reader* is one of our favorite anarcha-feminist zines, with such useful sections as "Are You a Manarchist? A Questionnaire," "Just ask a Woman," and "Shut the Fuck Up, or How to Act Better at Meetings."

9. Anarchist news—whether you read the website (http://anarchistnews.org/) or the (I think) unrelated Reddit page (http://www.reddit.com/r/AnarchistNews/), you'll be kept up-to-date on important contemporary issues facing anarchists and anyone else interested in radical social change.

10. *Anarchism and Education* by Judith Suissa (PM Press, 2010). Not only of use to those interested in education (although most anarchists are, to some extent), this book opens with around 53 pages of general discussion of anarchism, its philosophical roots, its underlying assumptions, and why it should be taken seriously. Suissa is an academic philosopher who is both engaged in work on education and sympathetic to the anarchist cause.

11. "Speciesism and Moral Status" by Peter Singer, the influential essay, available for free online (http://goo.gl/Bo2yiU) in which Singer asserts that "The mere difference of species cannot in itself determine moral status." Singer's work has been influential in informing our position on animal rights.

12. *How Nonviolence Protects the State* by Peter Gelderloos (South End Press, 2007). This slim, complacency-crushing volume delivers on its title, explaining how pacifism serves the statist system (even if that's not what many pacifists intend). Essential reading.

13. *The ABCs of Communist Anarchism* by Alexander Berkman (Vanguard Press, 1929). Probably the easiest-to-read book on anarchism ever written, he nevertheless covers all the essential points of anarcho-communist thought, starting with a Marxian critique of the wage system and moving all the way through carrying out, and defending, a revolution. If you only read one book on anarchism, read this one. Available for free online: http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bright/berkman/communistanarchy.pdf

14. Kickaction.ca: "Intersectionality and Feminism." A succinct and edifying introduction to the timely and critical concept of "intersectionality" in feminist thought—critical knowledge for all anarchists. http://www.kickaction.ca/en/node/1499

15. Shameless plug: Check out our site (http://theanarchistassociation.wordpress.com/) for news, info, and content, including current and back issues of Black Flag, listed under the "Projects" drop-down menu at the top of the page.